



ADOT STATEWIDE ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN



FLAGSTAFF DISTRICT AGENCY STAFF WORKSHOP

May 11, 2006 / 2:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.

ADOT Flagstaff District Office Modular Training Room
1901 South Milton Road, Flagstaff

ATTENDANCE

Dale Buskirk, *Arizona Department of
Transportation, Transportation Planning
Director*

David Wessel, *Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning
Organization*

John Booth, *Coconino National Forest*

Chuck Gillick, *Arizona Department of
Transportation, North Region Traffic*

Judy Adams, *Red Rock Road Coconino NT*

John O'Brien, *Coconino National Forest*

Tim Dalgowski, *Coconino County*

Jim Gerard, *Arizona Department of Public Safety*

Rod Wigman, *Arizona Department of Public
Safety*

Warren Sutphen, *Arizona Department of
Transportation, Flagstaff*

Dale Wegner, *Coconino County*

John Harper, *Arizona Department of
Transportation, Flagstaff*

George Wallace, *Arizona Department of
Transportation, SPMG*

Jerry Flannery, *Coconino County*

Bill Tewler, *Coconino County*

Gerry Craig, *City of Flagstaff*

Pauline Dodson, *Bureau of Indian Affairs,
Department of Transportation, Tuba City*

Jeri Mendell, *Arizona Department of
Transportation, Flagstaff*

Consultant Staff in Attendance

Rick Ensdorff, *URS*
Caraly Foreman, *URS*

Cristina Cooke, *URS*

HANDOUTS:

Agency Outreach Meeting – Agenda (1 page)
Conceptual Access Management Decision Flow
Chart (1 page)

Arizona Statewide Access Management Program
Overview (pamphlet)
Benefits Of A Statewide Access Management
Program For Arizona (pamphlet)



MEETING SUMMARY

1. Welcome and Introductions

Dale Buskirk began the meeting with the introductions and an explanation of the importance of the meeting. He stated that meetings and presentations about the program have already been held with regional planning entities, such as MPOs and COGs. He stated that access management is an important nexus in connecting transportation and land use planning and that interagency participation and partnering is a critical part of this project for it to be successful. We are now in the phase where the team is meeting with public agency staff leaders in each ADOT District and their local land use planning jurisdictions. Dale Buskirk also emphasized that based on national traffic safety and accident statistics, Arizona was found to be an opportunity for safety. He stated that this program will address Arizona's highway safety needs and requirements.

John Harper thanked attendees for coming. He added some logistics comments relating to accident statistics for Arizona and reiterated Dale Buskirk's comments about the program and the importance of outreach and consensus.

2. PowerPoint Presentation

A PowerPoint presentation, which is available on the project website, was presented and discussed the following:

- What is Access Management
- Access Features Typically Managed
- Benefits of Access Management
- NHCPR Report 420-Impacts of Access Management Techniques
- Crashes in Arizona, 2003, Access Related Crashes in Arizona
- Policy Initiative
- Arizona Access Management Program Work Flow Diagram and Schedule
- Access Decisions:
 - Access Permitting Process
 - Planning
 - Local Agencies
 - ADOT Construction Practices
 - Arizona Highway Projects
 - Right of Way Activities
 - Transportation Board
 - Traffic and Safety Programs
- Vision Statement
- Program Objectives
- Local Agency Perspective on Access Management
- How a Statewide Access Management Program will work.



ADOT STATEWIDE ACCESS MANAGEMENT PLAN



FLAGSTAFF DISTRICT AGENCY STAFF WORKSHOP

- Conceptual Access Management Decision Flow Chart
- ADOT/Local Agency Coordination
- Classification System
- Access Classifications: The Heart of the Program
- Hierarchy of Access Classifications
- Access Classification Considerations
- Colorado Classification System
- Key Design Elements
- Waiver/Variance Process
- Other Considerations: Access Management Plans, Interim Permit Approval
- Brief Your Local Officials
- Business and Development Community Participation
- District Agency Outreach

The project's Vision Statement was discussed. Rick Ensdorff explained that we need to have a framework but it needs flexibility and a way to deal with "gray areas". Keep the program consistent and reliable while allowing local flexibility to manage access decisions over time. Critical to the success of this program is partnerships and a consistent approach to access management.

Rick Ensdorff explained that Access Management is defined as a systematic management of location, spacing and design of access roads and access points. Access Management includes state highways. Rick Ensdorff discussed that the safety study data shows the more access points there are, the greater potential for accidents. Access Management accidents are defined as occurring at a driveway and state roadway, or, at an intersection and state roadway. Although currently unavailable, Rick hopes to have specific data for Arizona to share with agencies in the near future. The benefits of Access Management were further explained, including Safety, Mobility, and Economic.

Rick Ensdorff went on to discuss the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) establishment and composition. The TAC involves representatives from the following agencies, including ADOT, state engineers, senior staff, district engineers, local agencies, MPOs, and other public agency and entity leaders.

Rick Ensdorff explained that Access Management is defined as a systematic management of location, spacing and design of access roads and access points. Access Management includes state highways. The benefits of Access Management were further explained, including Safety, Mobility, and Economic.

John Booth gave a project example from the SR 74 Access Management program where the plan was successful. He also noted that they were able to review the plans and have input as they saw necessary.

Rick Ensdorff asked, "How will it continue to work?"

Judy Adams replied, "It gets reviewed by the feds, but then it is limited by federal highway stipulations. From her perspective, they do not know what the long-term natural resources needs are or needed resources". Referring to the USFS Management Plan (which only covers a 5-10 year period), she explained that it is in an 'umbrella' format, which is not as specific or long-range as, for example, community plans.

Rick Ensdorff then asked, "How is it sustainable"?

Dale Buskirk explained that because statewide land is owned by so many entities, including the federal agencies, things change and need to change to new dynamics, causing plans to evolve over time.

David Wessel asked, "Regarding classification changes ahead, how do these get updated as change happens"?

Rick explained that we will go into further detail later in the presentation, today, but, based on his experience, especially from the other side; he realizes it needs to be a rigorous process. He used his experience as a former director and a railroad grade scenario as an example. He completed saying that it is possible to be flexible, but it is still a rigorous process to change classifications.

A local county planner asked if all the previous work would be changed or if they were just going to be starting over with this new program. Rick Ensdorff explained that no, we would not be starting over. Instead, we would be building upon the old plans. The planner stated that it seems that ADOT has been more flexible with them. John Harper replied that ADOT really does not currently have the means to decline [permits] much.

A Cottonwood member said that he had the opposite experience and gave an example of an SR 89A 3000 unit development request. Once the approval became a "done deal", the developer then changed and came back wanting more. In the City's case in handling this situation, their access management plan stuck. In another case, when they did not have one, the results could have been better.

Rick Ensdorff then asked the group, "Why did SR 89A work?"

John Harper responded that buying access rights was one reason it worked. Rick Ensdorff added that "strategic" acquisition of access rights is still an element of this program. This program includes looking at the rest of the statewide needs.

David Wessel gave an example of a development just south of the city and the impacts to access / land use. There are conflicting policies without good spatial requirements and related criteria. This is the same with frontage roads having conflicting interests - closures or development plans that build a



network. In addition, with physical restrictions such as mountains and railways, they are sometimes forced into less than ideal access decisions. He stated that, at the 'end of the day', he is hoping to see clarity and some compromise with balancing conflicting interests.

Judy Adams stated that even though she does not represent them, "...the Prescott National Forest is getting a lot of access management pressure placed on the agency, as well as costs from ADOT in getting free right-of-way due to new development and corridors needing to plow through USFS land. This creates a whole new management system layer to them on land that has never been affected or planned for before."

David Wessel agreed and commented on liking the decision-making flowchart handout. He also agreed with present process decision difficulties and of needing these to also include urban design, character, aesthetics, and impacts to surrounding areas when making access decisions.

Dale Buskirk asked if there were any special considerations that we should be aware of and that should be taken into account in relation to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) while developing the Statewide Access Management Program.

Pauline Dodson, representing the BIA Department of Transportation in Tuba City, briefly discussed the challenges they experience in knowing who and how to deal with access management issues on tribal lands, particularly the challenges in collecting data. Caraly Foreman agreed and provided an example of recent challenges faced in gathering accident, crash, and safety data on tribal land when developing the US 160 Corridor Profile and Access Management Study. Ultimately, it was on-hands communications and working with multiple tribal entities and partnerships (e.g., wards, law enforcement, hospitals, and insurance companies) that resulted in developing good safety data. Pauline Dodson agreed and stated she had a recent similar experience.

Jerry Flannery commented that it would be beneficial to speed up the access management process, as [Coconino County] are having difficulty restricting or limiting access (e.g., parcels on intersections / corner parcel denials, etc.). They have had limited success when dealing with double frontage. It is also difficult to enforce, as they do not have a real consistent or comprehensive policy, one that they could work with ADOT and use as a model county-wide and with the locals.

Rick Ensdorff then addressed the group asking who, within their agencies, is actually responsible for permit approval processes and access plans. He also provided the corresponding handout for the slide for discussion.

David Wessel stated that the permits usually go through extensive review and then City traffic and engineering staff usually work with ADOT. The question was asked if planning staff get involved. Jerry Flannery responded, "Infrequently."

John Harper explained that from the planning department, ADOT gets email updates of what development and access-related activities are coming up at the city and county levels, including adjacent areas. Warren Sutphen stated that the updates even look at what impact development may have on a state highway even if the development or business activity is not planned off of it. David Wessel explained that there is an ADOT “red letter” process which updates and alerts agencies to projects and development that ADOT needs to be aware of for potential state highway system impacts.

George Wallace and Dale Buskirk explained that the “red letter” updates are currently distributed within the MAG, PAG, and Pinal County areas and are planned to eventually come to the rest of the state. It serves as a mutual, beneficial notice to area public agencies when big development comes into an area. Notice of large development is not limited to just off of or adjacent to a state highway. Ones that are off the system or that may potentially impact the system are included in the notifications to ADOT and other impacted public agencies.

Rick Ensdorff explained that the Statewide Access Management Program will help make these types of notifications, communications, and this process consistent.

Rick Ensdorff then asked the group, “When the red letter arrives, what is the next action by all?”

Jerry Flannery stated that, with permits, the City and ADOT have ongoing every two week review / turnaround meetings. Also, the County and City hold monthly meetings together to discuss common interests, including critical development and agency coordination issues. It’s still a ‘clunky’ process, but not from lack of agency will or participation. They hold annual meetings with the USFS and the BIA.

Rick Ensdorff asked what happens at these meetings regarding decisions?

David Wessel provided an example of a large development where over 1000 access points were needed. There are no vested rights, currently. He stated that before they can be put in the Regional Plan, they have to obtain ADOT review and approval. As this development may have significant impact on ADOT, he wanted to know what happens next. Jerry Flannery responded that a preliminary traffic analysis and an ADOT District Office engineering analysis must be completed before the planning & zoning commission will approve it. Part of that is requiring a higher level of work.

George Wallace commented that every time developments come along, they are re-inventing the wheel. It seems neither the City or ADOT have concrete access management criteria to go by. They do not currently have good tools in place and they looking to us to help them with this.

Rick Ensdorff asked, “Would local planning and zoning or council approve development without ADOT approval?”

Jerry Flannery replied, “Conditionally, but as the building permit is the next step, this is where more involvement from ADOT is needed. When they know a permit request is coming, ADOT is engaged

most of the time by weekly emails and meetings. If not, they approve the permit conditionally and then engage ADOT at the building permit stage.”

Rick stated that we will work through who, what, when, and how involvement and approvals are granted as part of developing this program.

The question was asked to Rick Ensdorff, “In Colorado, do they issue conditional permits based on zoning?”

Rick Ensdorff replied, “Conditional only given on approval. ADOT will say “ok/conditional” but then the city and county must approve or non-approve or not final approved by CDOT.” Discussion followed relating to disparity and fairness issues faced between cities, particularly in rural areas.

Regarding the access management classifications system task, David Wessel asked if we are going to re-classify the whole system.

Rick Ensdorff replied that no and that this was different from that. The county representative suggested calling this reclassification effort something different so that it is clearly not the same. Rick Ensdorff and Dale Buskirk agreed that this type of feedback is the reason that we need attendee feedback, just for instances such as this.

Rick Ensdorff presented the Classification Assignment Schedule Slide and then presented a sample of proposed categories that Arizona could use.

Jerry Flannery stated that this is what they were looking for and he emphasized the point made on the slides that, on a single road, the classification categories could change, say every mile. Discussion was then brought up about traffic interchanges, where they might be given a different segment classification(s), including segments right before or after them, to address safety requirements and land use plans. Chuck Gillick and John Harper brought up a gas station/convenient store permit request for access to the highway. It became a legal issue versus the business using an already existing local road for access. The lawsuit to deny them highway access was recently won.

Rick added that it’s how the road functions and performs versus black and white design criteria. It needs to be consistent. He then used a project issue in Holbrook as an example.

A county representative inquired as to which is better for safety, more access points or u-turns? Rick Ensdorff replied that if well managed and designed, u-turns. Rick Ensdorff replied that these are great questions and that we have the top national experts on access management on our team, including Phil Demosthenes of Parametrix and Kristine Williams and Vergil Stover of the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR). They are also readily accessible and available to attendees to research or answer these types of questions.

Rick Ensdorff re-stated that once access management classification categories are assigned, the process needs to be rigorous regarding allowing variances and changes. As for amending or changing a classification after it has been approved, Rick Ensdorff pointed out it is a rigorous process. Everyone, the county and government, has to agree to these changes. Changing a classification is not common. In Colorado, there were only six changes to classifications in the first 10 years, and the majority of those were due to changes in land use. Ultimately, in Arizona, the State Transportation Board would have to approve any classification change. While explaining other considerations, he used SR 74 as an example. Experience has shown that decisions stick with an access management plan. Also, by approving permits on an interim basis, this allows changes as the land use and corridor changes.

Chuck Gillick asked, "Once we have the plan how does implementation work"? Rick Ensdorff explained that we would sort through this. We have consulted with the State Attorney General (AG)'s Office and will work through this, as legal and functional ramifications will be looked at to determine the implementation phase's process. Once we have "thrown the switch", usually there is a grace period, about three months. He also referred to team member, Phil Demosthenes as another resource who can provide additional good implementation examples.

John Harper then asked if there was every any turn-back? In which Rick Ensdorff stated that in Colorado, no.

Rick Ensdorff went on to discuss the next steps and action items needed for the project to move forward. He commented that a "homework" assignment for attendees after the workshop step is to go back to their organizations and to brief the local agencies and their local officials about the program, especially the elected officials and senior management, about this Access Management Program. Based on feedback received from prior workshops, the team has agreed to work with ADOT TPD and CCP to also send a letter to statewide elected officials letting them know what is happening so that they are not caught by surprise.

Rick Ensdorff also asked that another next step will be for attendees to connect with and to identify names of local developers and business communities after the workshop. The team will coordinate with ADOT TPD and CCP in developing a special focus group and outreach plan specifically orientated to this group this summer.

Rick Ensdorff then asked for feedback on the value of this presentation to the attendees and asked for suggestions for the future ones.

Dave Wessel commented that he believes we are 99% there and suggested a slide showing examples of what the "differences" between the sample classifications would be (design-wise, for example).



A representative from Coconino County recommended more individual public involvement and outreach. John Harper agreed and suggested that he and the County, for example, go the City of Page and other invited attendees not present at the workshop, as there are not enough team members to go around.

Dale Buskirk reiterated all the meetings and presentations about the program that the team has held with local authorities and entities in the state so far, such as with the Rural Transportation Conference, ACEC – AZ Roads & Streets Conference, the AZ League of Cities and Towns, MPOs/COGs, policy boards, et al.

Adjournment

The meeting ended at 4:35 p.m.